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Allegiances

Character reference:
Lightningpaw - *Lightning's OC (RiverClan)*
Tigerpaw - *Tigerheart's OC (WindClan)*
Icepaw - *Shadow's OC (ShadowClan)*
Blazepaw - *Blazey's OC (ThunderClan)*
Shadepaw - *Mici's OC (ThunderClan)*
Whitepaw - *Curl's OC (RiverClan)*
Silentpaw - *Fire's OC (ShadowClan)*

(Just so fans won't get confused, the only POV's that will be featured is Tiger, Lightning, Blaze, Ice and Silent's POV's. The new admins are the supporting characters because of our fear of a character cluster XD)

~WW Team

RiverClan
Leader Stonestar - gray tom with amber eyes

Deputy Stripepelt - blue-eyed white tom cat (apprentice: Lightningpaw)

Medicine Cat Minnowfur - reddish she-cat with white spots and blue eyes

Warriors

Splashfish - brown tabby tom with hazel eyes (apprentice: Stormpaw)

Shallowstream - silver she-cat with green eyes (apprentice: Whitepaw)

Rushstream - white she-cat with green eyes

Wingfeather - tall white tom with blue eyes

Blossomflight - blue and gray she-cat with amber eyes

Shellclaw - pure black tom (apprentice: Moonpaw)

Waterleap - black and white tom with long legs and amber eyes

Coldfur - brown tom with black and white splotches

Driftpool - gray tom with hazel eyes

Littlestream - small white she-cat with green eyes and a bushy tail

Minttail - molted brown she-cat with thin fur and long legs and green eyes

Apprentices

Lightningpaw - silver and white she-cat with blue eyes

Whitepaw - white she-cat with blue eyes

Moonpaw - black tom with amber eyes

Stormpaw - almost black tabby tom with dark blue eyes

Queens

Troutpool - tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes and a very bushy tail (expecting kits)

Elders

None

WindClan

Leader Runningstar - large brown tabby tom with white paws and a long tail

Deputy Flowertail - white she-cat with brown splotches and black paws

Medicine Cat Emeraldleaf - dark gray she-cat

Warriors

Pouncespirit - gray tom cat

Sunheart - golden she-cat with bright amber eyes (apprentice: Tigerpaw)

Gorsefang - brown tom with black spots (apprentice: Hawkpaw)

Swiftleaf - white tom with long legs and a long tail

Ivystorm - light brown she-cat with thin fur and green eyes

Eaglesoar - black and white tom-cat

Crowwing - black tom with icy blue eyes

Cloudpatch - creamy white tom with brown stripes along back

Brittlesky - black tom

Rabbitleap - slender black she-cat with blue eyes

Apprentices

Tigerpaw - dark brown tabby tom with fierce amber eyes

Hawkpaw - lighter brown tabby tom

Queens

Skysprint - small slender white she-cat (Kits: Cliffkit - gray she-kit and Smallkit - small white she-kit)

Quickdapple - long-furred, slim brown she-cat with green eyes (expecting kits)

Elders

Grassfoot - old dusty-orange tom

Milkfur - white she-cat

ThunderClan
Leader Treestar - ginger she-cat

Deputy Hailstorm - gray tabby tom with nearly orange eyes

Medicine Cat Featherleaf - white she-cat with brown eyes (apprentice: Snowpaw)

Warriors

Mouseear (apprentice: Blazepaw)

Hawkfire - ginger-golden tom with dark green eyes

Oakfoot - brown tabby tom

Sootheart - ginger she-cat (apprentice: Shadepaw)

Raintail - gray tom cat with yellow eyes

Leafheart - molted brown she-cat with green eyes

Greenclaw - brown tom with green eyes

Goldenfang - golden she-cat with white paws and green eyes

Spikefur - spike-furred black tom with blue eyes

Graystem - gray she-cat with green eyes

Whiskerfoot- black-and-white tom with dark blue eyes and long whiskers

Apprentices

Blazepaw - mottled brown she-cat with yellow eyes

Shadepaw - black she-cat with unusual orange eyes

Snowpaw - white tom cat with icy blue eyes

Queens

None

Elders

Slipperyfeet- white tom with gray paws

Blackears - light brown tom with black ears

Lightfur - light gray blind she-cat

ShadowClan
Leader Foxstar - reddish tom with white stripes

Deputy Echofoot - black-and-white she-cat

Medicine Cat Wildberry - dark gray tom with white underbelly and messy fur

Warriors
Nightleap - black tom with white paws and tail tip (apprentice: Icepaw)

Amberheart - ginger she cat with white stripes along tail

Emberlight - dark gray she-cat with green eyes

Pineleaf - molted gray tom (apprentice: Silentpaw)

Volebreeze - black tom with white and black splotches (apprentice: Frogpaw)

Mudstep - brown tom with blue eyes

Redrowan - reddish she-cat with green eyes

Marshtail - brown tabby tom

Frozenfoot - green-eyed white tom

Whitenose - black she-cat with an unusually pale nose

Roseleaf - ginger she-cat with yellow eyes

Apprentices

Icepaw - white she-cat with black stripes along tail tip and under emerald eyes

Shiningpaw - white she-cat with black paws and green eyes

Silentpaw - dusky brown tom with amber eyes

Frogpaw - white tabby tom

Queens
Bluebelly - blueish-gray she-cat with white underbelly (kits: Darkkit - black tom with amber eyes and Fernkit - gray she-cat with yellow eyes)

Elders
Beetlefoot - very old tom with black fur and green eyes

Outside The Clans
Rogues
Brackenheart - brown tabby tom
Sparrowleaf- black and white tom
Loners
Scrub - a white tom with blue eyes
Spots - brown she-cat with yellow eyes and black spots

Prologue

The sky was dim, even though it was day time. Gray clouds, thick and dark, covered the sky endlessly, hinting that a storm was soon to come. The trees rattled endlessly, and the forest ground trembled.

A young warrior observed the scenery with a small hint of fear, but he forced himself to be brave. The winds whipped at his fur the wrong way, messing it up, and it beat against his eyes making them sting. His paws felt uncomfortable in the damp dirt of the forest ground, but he ignored it and forced himself to trudge through the wind, pushing through its heavy force.

He heard his littermate call to him from up ahead. "Hey, Brackenheart!" His voice was faintly heard, but Brackenheart understood.

Brackenheart looked around until he spotted his brother padding toward him. "What is it, Sparrowleaf?" he asked worriedly. "Did something happen?" Brackenheart found it hard to look at his brother through all of the winds, but he forced himself to be strong.

"*You're* what's wrong!" Sparrowleaf growled. "You've got to hurry, or they'll find us, Brackenheart. You don't want that to happen to us, do you?"

"Of course not!" Brackenheart wasn't sure he meant what he had said. After all, they were leaving their Clan. Leaving the Clan was a big deal for two cats to go out alone, but both toms couldn't stay in ThunderClan anymore. And especially in this storm---it was not making anything easier for Brackenheart and his brother.

Sparrowleaf beckoned forward. "Let's find shelter!" he yowled over the wind. "It's too dangerous!"

Brackenheart didn't need to respond. Immediately, he began to look around, anxious for a place to shelter from the wind. Perhaps an

abandoned den, or a cave hidden in the undergrowth? There was nothing of the sort around. He followed his brother, keeping a close eye out just in case he spotted a good hiding place.

Tree, pits, places that aren't good, Brackenheart thought with dismay. *Is there no place for us to shelter?* Fear crept into his heart. What if they die in this dreadful storm?

Suddenly, heavy rain began to fall, beating down hard and uncomfortably onto Brackenheart's back, making him growl to himself with annoyance. Could the winds have already gotten any worse? He felt guilty for some reason. What if StarClan was mad at Brackenheart and Sparrowleaf for leaving their Clan to live on their own, and brewed this storm as an expression of their rage?

"Come on!" Sparrowleaf called, taking off ahead of him.

Brackenheart immediately burst from his spot, chasing after his brother into the forest, getting closer and closer to the edge of the territory. *This is it . . . I won't be returning back to ThunderClan, will I*? Brackenheart thought. *Of course I won't be. Why would such a noble Clan want to keep a traitor like me around*?

His paws pounded faster, weaving through familiar tree branches with such grace and ability as if he had lived here for endless moons. Brackenheart leaped right over a bush, while Sparrowleaf scrambled under, and the two continued to pelt towards the territory borders. They were so close to leaving the territory for good. They won't be back. Not ever. The ache had filled into Brackenheart's belly, but he had to ignore it. It was his decision; it was his *destiny* to leave the Clans. Not even StarClan alone can change the way of choice for living cats.

Finally, they pelted over the borders, not taking a second glance back, and began running as fast as they could, farther and farther away from ThunderClan, and closer and closer to unfamiliar territory.

It felt as if a heavy rock had been dropped down Brackenheart's belly. Fear of this new territory crept into his heart, and the longing for his old territory made his legs feel weak.

* * *

Brackenheart yawned with exhaustion, curling up in his nest. Earlier, Sparrowleaf had found this cave for them to temporarily rest during the storm. It was surprise that he was actually comfortable. Moss lined Brackenheart's nest, as well as feathers and leaves and small sticks.

"I've never felt so great in my life," sighed Sparrowleaf as he plopped onto his own makeshift nest.

"Does your nest feel that good?" Brackenheart asked, opening one eye to get a good look at his brother.

Sparrowleaf shook his head. "No, I feel at ease. No Clan to look over my back, and no leaders to boss me around. I feel as if I was a whole different cat the moment we'd crossed the borders." Pride shone into his brother's eyes. "I got us here, didn't I? We'll have the life we always wanted."

Brackenheart shrugged and nodded. "Yeah, we will." He looked hopefully at Sparrowleaf. "Won't you miss our Clan?" he blurted out.

Sparrowleaf looked at him pointedly. "You don't mean you miss living in that cramped space, do you?" asked the brown and black tom. "We left for a reason, and now that we're living out here we won't have time to worry about them anymore."

"You're right," Brackenheart murmured, looking down to his paws. He knew deep down that Sparrowheart was truly happy about leaving. There was nothing he could say about his brother's feelings, or his convincing that this new life will be better. The reason they left, after all, was for the things he did that he couldn't face his Clan for.

"Why don't we sleep?" suggested Sparrowleaf. "We are going to have a long day tomorrow. We can't live in this cave forever; too close to WindClan and ThunderClan."

"I'll see you when I wake up," agreed Brackenheart, yawning. He

rest his head on his nest, and closed his eyes. Soon, sleep engulfed him and his world became dark.

Hi guys, it was Lightning writing! I just wanted to fill in with a plan all of us admins will try to stick to on updating this book. I was thinking that we have to update it sometime every week so the chapter rate can be regular and the story can be interesting. I hope you like this book!!

~~Lightning

Chapter One

[image]

Hi guys, this is Lightning starting off the book here with our first character! I hope you all like it, and don't forget that even though this is my project *all* (or most) of the admins are contributing to it! Look forward to when they post chapters, too! :3

~~Lightning

The wind whipped at Tigerpaw's fur as he stood over the moor, taking in the greenleaf scents around him. He could scent a rabbit scuffling out of it's burrow, hungry for food. Immediately, Tigerpaw crouched down, and eyed the rabbit hole watchfully as the rabbit climbed out of the safety of it's home. Excitement rippled through Tigerpaw. If he can manage to catch this, it'll be his first rabbit yet. Maybe his Clanmates would respect him if he brought this prey home as fresh-kill?

The plump rabbit sniffed at the grass while Tigerpaw crouched within the ferns. Cautiously, he watched, waiting for the right moment. *As soon as that rabbit has its back turned, it won't know what was coming!* he thought with excitement.

His prey, which was oblivious to the fact that it was being watched, turned away trying to find more food to eat. Feeling that this was the right time, Tigerpaw dashed from his spot, and pounced. The rabbit heard him though, and raced away.

"Mouse-dung!" Tigerpaw spat. He ran after it, kicking away dirt behind him. His legs outstretched into long strides, and his tail balanced out behind him. Running as fast as he could, Tigerpaw hurled himself at the rabbit, grabbing on to it with his claws. It was no use, for the rabbit escaped his grasp before he could release a killing bite.

The rabbit sped away again, pushing itself to run faster. Again, Tigerpaw chased after it, pushing himself to run faster as well. He knew that his prey was swift, but it wasn't swifter than Tigerpaw! One last time, he began to run in long strides, already getting out of breath. He was tired from the other two chases, but he could not give up.

Suddenly, though, another cat leaped from a hill, and tumbled right into the rabbit. Hawkpaw! His denmate bent down, and killed the rabbit with a bite on the neck.

"Hey!" yowled Tigerpaw, his fur sticking up. "That was *my* prey! I found it first!"

Hawkpaw sneered. "It's not yours, I caught it!"

"I was chasing it, if you hadn't noticed. That was so unfair, I was so close!"

Tigerpaw was raging with fury. He was so eager to catch that prey, and was only a rabbit-hop away from it. He could have gotten it if Hawkpaw wasn't there.

Hawkpaw took the rabbit's scruff into his mouth. "You were close, but not close enough. I caught it, I'm the one to bring it home." His chest puffed out with pride.

Tigerpaw sighed, knowing that there was nothing he could do about it. If Hawkpaw been the one who was pursing the rabbit, and Tigerpaw be the one lying in wait to catch it, he would want to call it his own for killing it. "Whatever," he mumbled, padding up ahead. "I'll catch one next time, you'll see."

A *mrrow* of amusement sounded right behind the two apprentices. "You both keep getting your tails in a twist with each other," Sunheart, Tigerpaw's mentor meowed. The golden-brown she-cat purred. "If anything, you two caught the rabbit *together*."

"Did not! I was the one who killed it," Hawkpaw protested. He held his prey protectively.

Sunheart shook her head. "I suppose your mentor didn't teach you

about partner hunting yet. Am I right, Hawkpaw?" The brown tabby apprentice didn't say anything, so she continued to talk. "Well, if it weren't for Tigerpaw's chase, you would of never got it in the first place."

Tigerpaw's ear tips raised. "Really? So that means Hawkpaw wasn't the one who caught it? Technically, it was me, right?" He was staring hopefully into his mentor's eyes.

She was a wise and kind senior warrior, and had already taught Tigerpaw a whole lot even though it had only been a quarter-moon since his apprentice ceremony. Even though he caught small things such as birds and mice these last few hunting patrols, Tigerpaw had been aiming to catch his first rabbit. And before Hawkpaw chimed it, Tigerpaw was sure this rabbit was the one.

Sunheart shook her head and stopped walking. "You both worked together in catching it, even if you didn't notice. The credit isn't Hawkpaw's or Tigerpaw's." She stared right at both of them at a time. "It's *both* of your catch."

Hawkpaw gave Tigerpaw a quick stare. "Fine . . . I'll say we both caught it," he finally agreed. "But I get to take it back to camp since I killed it." He padded on ahead of Sunheart and Tigerpaw, his tail twitching with both annoyance and triumph.

"That arrogant little furball," Tigerpaw said through clenched teeth. It wasn't fair! Couldn't they at least carry it together? It was both of theirs, but Hawkpaw just wanted to bask in the pride of the Clan as soon as they to camp. The only way by doing that is by using a good piece of prey.

Sunheart gave Tigerpaw a nudge. "Don't be sad about it, you'll catch a new rabbit one day for sure. And it'll be a much better and plumper one too." She gave him a good-humored look. "After all, you're quite the young tom, and I'm sure you'll charm your prey before you even catch its scent."

Tigerpaw's whiskers twitched. "Sometimes I don't get you, Sunheart," he said.

The moor grass under Tigerpaw's claws suddenly changed direction along with the wind. A new presence caught on behind him.

"Hello, Sunheart, Tigerpaw," said Hawkpaw's mentor, Gorsefang. He didn't even look at Tigerpaw. "Did Hawkpaw catch the rabbit he's holding?"

Tigerpaw noticed that Gorsefang was carrying two dead birds in his jaws, enough to feed three or four hungry cats.

"We caught it together," Tigerpaw piped up. He would feel a little frustrated if every cat just gave all the credit to Hawkpaw. He was even a little frustrated for not really catching anything today, but he knew he shouldn't be hard on himself. After all, he was never an apprentice for long anyways.

Gorsefang simply nodded. "Good teamwork," commented the tom before padding on ahead to join Hawkpaw. Tigerpaw remained by Sunheart's side. Silently, the two of them padded to the camp, relishing the breeze against the hot greenleaf air.

Soon, the camp which was a shallow scoop of ground open to the sky was visible. Tigerpaw could see the camp's Tallrock from here. He raced from his spot, running as fast as he could until he burst through the camp entrance. Sunheart emerged in the camp right behind him.

"Welcome back, Sunheart," Swiftleaf, a white tom-cat greeted immediately. "And to you, Tigerpaw."

Tigerpaw nodded. "Hi Swiftleaf!" he greeted in return. He padded away, and looked all around the camp, wondering how every cat was doing. A few warriors were sharing tongues right on a warm sunny patch of land, while Cloudpatch, Brittlesky and Rabbitleap all shared a rabbit. Tigerpaw spotted the elders in their den, which was located in an old badger's den in a corner of the camp.

He padded over to them. One of the elders, Milkfur, was fast asleep while Grassfoot was trying to groom his pelt.

"Hi Grassfoot," meowed Tigerpaw politely. "Do you need any help?"

"Hi there, young Tigerpaw," Grassfoot meowed. "I indeed do; I feel three or four fleas crawling around my back, but I can't reach them. Could you possibly get them for me?"

Tigerpaw purred. "That's what apprentices are for, Grassfoot," he said. "How was your day so far?" He reached down and searched through Grassfoot's fur, trying to find one of the fleas. He spotted a tiny black shape moving swiftly around, and Tigerpaw bent down, cracking the pest between his teeth before spitting it away.

"I've had a fine morning. The warriors brought home some good prey," he rasped. "I wish I could still hunt, but I'm afraid I'm much too old for that."

Tigerpaw found the second flea towards Grassfoot's neck and killed it before it can get anywhere. "It's okay, we like hunting for elders. It gives us a responsibility."

"You sound like a warrior already," Grassfoot mewed, his voice warm. "I remember when I was your age. I hated picking fleas from elder's fur. I can't imagine how boring this must be for you."

"I don't mind at all!" Tigerpaw objected, finding the third flea and cracking it in between his teeth. "Elders have good stories."

"That's Milkfur--she's the better story teller." Grassfoot purred. "She's lived such a full life."

"I'm sure you've lived a full life too," Tigerpaw meowed, searching around for any more fleas. "Anyways, I'd like to hear something."

"Sure. Tell me," Grassfoot said. "Anything for you, Tigerpaw."

"What was my father like?" he suddenly asked.

Grassfoot shook his head. "You already know what he's like," the elder objected. Once Tigerpaw realized that there were no more fleas in the dusty-orange tom's pelt, he padded face-to-face with him to meet his green eyes. "He was a good warrior, and a trouble-maker at that. Like you."

"I already know that, but what was he *really* like?" Tigerpaw pushed

on. "No one ever likes talking about him. Or my mother at that . . ." He had never met his parents, because his father died before he was born in battle, and his mother also died while kitting. He was born an only kit with no siblings, and grew up under Hawkpaw's mother.

"I can't remember well. He died over several moons ago, Tigerpaw," Grassfoot responded. "It's a sad thing to think about."

"Sorry for making you remember," murmured Tigerpaw. "I won't do it again."

"Good," Grassfoot said. "Now scurry off. There's probably something better to do than mess with an old cat's head."

Tigerpaw nodded and left his spot to go and find Hawkpaw. Even though the two apprentices often argued, Hawkpaw was Tigerpaw's friend, and they grew up together. He spotted Hawkpaw dropping their rabbit onto the fresh-kill pile which was hidden by a clump of ferns.

Hawkpaw looked up, catching Tigerpaw's scent. "Finally you get here," meowed the brown-tabby. "I wondered if you fell into a rabbit hole."

"I'm not the one who'd fall into a rabbit hole here!" he playfully shot back, leaping onto Hawkpaw. He had to push the thoughts of his parents away from his mind. They were long dead. What's there to think about?

Hawkpaw snarled and pretended to bat Tigerpaw's ear. "Take this, Dirtpaw!" he spat, and kicked him over.

Tigerpaw scrambled from his spot and leaped onto Hawkpaw's back, pinning him down so that his belly touched to ground, and so that he was swept in dirt and dust and grass. "Who's Dirtpaw now, *Dirtpaw*?" Tigerpaw taunted.

Hawkpaw flipped over, forcing Tigerpaw to trip and fall on his back. "Not me!" he shot back. He put his paws to Tigerpaw's chest, holding him down. "Take that back!"

Tigerpaw pushed Hawkpaw off and snarled. "No way!"

"Both of you, *stop*!" yowled Ivystorm, Hawkpaw's mother. "Tigerpaw, get away from him right now! You're hurting him." She dropped her angry gaze into him. Tigerpaw flattened his ears, but didn't say anything. Did she really think he'd hurt his own Clanmate?

Hawkpaw jumped to Tigerpaw's defense. "We were just playing, Ivystorm!" he said. "He wasn't hurting me. It was just a game."

"He's right, we were playing," Tigerpaw added.

Ivystorm narrowed her eyes. "Well, if you two are going to play, take it *outside* the camp. You were scaring the kits." She pointed her tail to the nursery, which was a gorse bush that was right beside the Tallrock. Inside, Cliffkit and Smallkit shrunk in their nests. They were both barely older than one moon, so they were still tiny.

"We're sorry," said Tigerpaw, dipping his head to prove his honesty. Then, he turned to his denmate. "Come on, Hawkpaw. Let's go." He ran ahead of him, and left the camp entrance, eager.

Hawkpaw followed right behind, the brown tabby dashing as fast as he could. "I'll race you to the Moonpool stream!" he challenged, shooting past Tigerpaw.

"No fair!" Tigerpaw yowled, running after Hawkpaw. "You got a head start!"

Tigerpaw burst from his spot, and chased after Hawkpaw, eager to catch up with him, but it was no use because Hawkpaw was already way ahead of them. Tigerpaw pushed himself to run faster, forcing his legs to stretch farther. His tail straightened out behind him for balance, and Tigerpaw raced down the moor, chasing after Hawkpaw.

Hawkpaw took a glance backward to see if Tigerpaw was still far, but Tigerpaw felt a spark of triumph when he saw his friend become surprised at how close he had come. *I'm almost there!* thought Tigerpaw with an eager tingle in his belly. He noticed that Hawkpaw was pushing himself farther as well, and took longer and lighter strides.

Tigerpaw flattened his ears against the wind, and began to run at his fastest. He was panting with exhaustion, but gulped it down. *Once we get to the Moonpool stream, I'll take a long nice drink of water,* he thought, continuing to run as fast as he could.

He could tell that he was getting close. The grass underpaw was becoming more prickly and the scents began to become more like a forest. The moor's grass was becoming greener as he approached the stream. Even though they were getting close, Hawkpaw wasn't slowing down. He only seemed to be picking up speed.

Tigerpaw spat with frustration, and continued to run at his fastest. He was just going to have to push himself farther! Tigerpaw did as so, and went beyond his limit, taking long, light strides and swiftly repeating the process. He was going so fast! With a rush, he went straight past Hawkpaw.

"I did it!" yowled Tigerpaw. But his cheering was a second too soon. A few strides after he passed Hawkpaw, he tumbled right in the Moonpool stream face-first, diving into the cool water.

Hawkpaw gave a yowl of alarm and tripped, falling in himself. He immediately recovered from the water, and shot a glare at Tigerpaw. "Mouse-dung!" spat the apprentice. He growled with annoyance. "I can't believe it---last moment, you passed me!"

"I did," Tigerpaw beamed proudly. The two apprentices were soaking wet, their fur clinging to their skin. Tigerpaw shifted uncomfortably. He wished that he hadn't fallen in the water.

Hawkpaw narrowed his eyes. "Well, at least I got to stay ahead of you most of the time."

"That's because you got a head start," retorted Tigerpaw. "It could've been easier if we played this fair."

"It was fair, you're just delusional," Hawkpaw denied.

"Oh yeah?" Tigerpaw asked. "Then take this!" Without a warning, he splashed cold water onto Hawkpaw's face, and he gave a *mrrow* of laughter.

Hawkpaw growled. "I see how you want to take things," he challenged. "Now you're in for it!" He splashed as much water as he could on Tigerpaw, and quickly scrambled out of the water.

Alarm went through Tigerpaw as soon as Hawkpaw climbed out. "Hawkpaw, get back down here!" he hissed. "That's *ThunderClan* territory! If a patrol sees you, they'll---"

"What in the name of StarClan are two WindClan apprentices doing on our territory?" growled an unfamiliar voice. Tigerpaw looked up, spotting a whole patrol of ThunderClan cats.

Oh no! he thought. *We're in for serious trouble . . .*

Chapter Two

[image]

It's still Lightning writing c: I'm getting a head start before the others can write, so don't worry.

~~Lightning

--

The wind and water whipped at Lightningkit's fur as she stood over the river, staring at her reflection. A shadow cast over the water that quickly passed by, weaving through small pebbles and stones, and tiny silvery fish darted from their spots, frightened. She put both of her forepaws in the water, watching it gently lap by on her paws, getting her fur wet.

Lightningkit loved that feeling. She enjoyed the water against the hot green-leaf air. Soon, though, when she was made an apprentice, she would have that advantage. *After all*, she thought, *my apprentice ceremony is coming up so soon! I wonder when Stonestar is going to make me one already?*

She kept staring down at her reflection, and within the water, she saw two figures creeping by. Her denmates, Moonkit and Whitekit, were stalking her. They didn't have any idea that she was watching.

Suddenly, Moonkit leaped right onto her back, and she dodged him, rolling over with him in her grasp. "I caught you!" she squeaked. "You'll never beat my lightning fast reflexes!"

"We'll see about that!" yowled Whitekit, leaping at Lightningkit. Both of them were obviously against her. She struggled hard, trying to kick them off for freedom, but it wouldn't work with the both of them trying to pin her down at once. She struggled and tried to swipe at them until Moonkit let go. Whitekit did not give up.

"Take this!" Whitekit said, biting down on Lightningkit's tail.

"Ouch!" yowled Lightningkit, finally managing to struggle free. "That hurt!" She leaped onto Whitekit's back.

"You can never pin me!" Whitekit said triumphantly.

She grunted with effort. "Yes I can!" Lightningkit was getting frustrated. She was too small to get Whitekit to fall to the ground no matter how hard she struggled, and the more she tried, the more Whitekit resisted.

Whitekit grunted and threw Lightningkit off of her back. "I did it!" the white she-cat said with triumph.

Lightningkit scoffed. "Next time, I'll get you!" she challenged.

"That is if you can," Moonkit taunted playfully.

Lightningkit sighed to herself. She was never able to pin down either Whitekit or Moonkit herself. She was a runt; never able to do anything the others could do. Even though she was the deputy's only kit and was suppose to be tall and strong like him, she wasn't. She must of taken after her mother, Sproutheart, who died of greencough two moons after Lightningkit was born. Or maybe she didn't take after Sproutheart at all and she was different and weird.

"I'll get you some day," Lightningkit murmured to herself. "I know it."

"Watch out Lightnintkit!" yowled Moonkit while running over to her, but he was too late.

A bird swooped down from the sky, and shoved her into right into the water. Lightningkit gave a yelp before she went under the surface, and she gasped for air but water was the only thing that came in. Fear filled into her belly. All around her, the water filled into her eyes, ears, nose, mouth and dampened her thick and long fur.

She kicked her way to the surface and coughed. "Whitekit! Moonkit!" she yelped. "Help!" Then, she went under the water again. The water engulfed her and her eyes were wide against the cold. She couldn't breathe, and she didn't know how to swim yet!

She could see Moonkit reaching for her, and Whitekit's worried expression through the rippling water.

Strong jaws gripped onto her scruff, and dragged her out of the water and back on to the land. Lightningkit coughed out water as she was being placed gently down, a few paw steps away from the water. She wondered who it was.

"You should be careful," said a familiar voice. It was Stormpaw. The almost-black tabby's muscles rippled under his glossy pelt which was soaked from the water, and his dark blue eyes were looking down at all three kits. Stormpaw had been an apprentice for only three moons already, but he had been an excellent learner since he had left the camp.

"S-sorry," Lightningkit stuttered, cold from the water. "We were playing, a-and a bird came . . ." Moonkit and Whitekit joined each side of her, warming her up.

Stormpaw nodded. "I know---it was probably not aiming for you, but you'll be alright if you stay away from the edge."

"We will," promised Whitekit. "It was just an accident. We're sorry, Stormpaw."

"Thank you Stormpaw," Lightningkit said again, but she felt a tiny bit annoyed. He always acted like the kits were stupid. From the camp entrance, Stormpaw's mentor, Splashfish, was calling and waiting for him impatiently. Splashfish was an excellent warrior and was respected among the rest of RiverClan, but he was known for his sharp attitude and little patience.

"Coming!" Stormpaw called. He turned to the three kits. "I'll have to see you later." And with that, he padded to Splashfish and together, they left the camp.

Lightningkit, Whitekit and Moonkit stared at their tails as they left. "I wonder how Stormpaw can handle that cat," muttered Moonkit, only loud enough for both of the she-cats to hear. "I wouldn't last a day with Splashfish."

"Stormpaw's patient, that's all," Lightningkit offered, but she was only trying to sound nice though deep down she was still annoyed. "It must be easy for him."

Whitekit nodded with agreement. "And he's very . . . quiet and reserved. I wonder why he's like that sometimes."

Moonkit shrugged. "Maybe he just wants to be?" suggested the black tom.

"Uh-oh," whispered Lightningkit. Her gaze was on Blossomflight and Wingfeather---Whitekit and Moonkit's parents. "Look, they're coming!"

Wingfeather was a tall, white-furred, gentle tom, and was very caring towards all of the kits, even Lightningkit although she's not his daughter. Blossomflight is a blue-gray she-cat and had mothered Lightningkit ever since her own mother died, but her temper is short and she hates when either Whitekit, Moonkit or Lightningkit gets into trouble. Lightningkit stood up straighter, but she was still shivering from the cold water.

"Just look at you!" said Blossomflight with an angry growl. "*Now* what have you three been up to? I've always got to keep my eye on you, especially Lightningkit, and I can never have a moment of rest."

Lightningkit looked at her paws. "I'm sorry, Blossomflight. I fell in the water."

"Clearly," said a new voice. It was Lightningkit's father---the deputy of RiverClan---Stripepelt. "Come here, Lightningkit. Let's get your fur dried up. You don't want to be made into an apprentice looking like *that*, do you?"

"Apprentice?" repeated Moonkit with a gasp. "You mean we are gonna be made into apprentices?"

Excitement rippled through Lightningkit as she went on to her father. *An apprentice*? she thought. *If only I had known it was today! Why did I* have *to fall into the river on a day like this?* Stripepelt

began to groom her pelt in the wrong way to dry up the water on her fur. Lightningkit never minded water, she was just upset that she was all wet right now because her apprentice ceremony might be soon!

"We talked to Stonestar just moments ago," Wingfeather explained as Blossomflight began to groom her own kit's messy fur. "He said that you three are six moons today, and you're all crowding the nursery. We decided that it was time."

Lightningkit was shaking with excitement. An apprentice! She couldn't believe it. "Who do you think will be my mentor, Stripepelt?" asked Lightningkit, tilting her head as Stripepelt continued to groom her fur dry.

Stripepelt responded in between licks, "You will have to see when the ceremony begins."

"I can't wait!" Whitekit squeaked.

"Learning how to swim will be great," added Moonkit with a shivering sigh.

Blossomflight scowled. "You two ought to hold still. You're bouncing around like little kits! And not to mention you have the looks of them too if you don't let me groom down your fur."

Wingfeather gave Blossomflight a look. "Oh, come on. They're going to become apprentices. We were all just as excited when we were their age, were we not?"

Blossomflight gave Moonkit a last lick and looked down at him with satisfaction. "I suppose you are right, Wingfeather."

Lightningkit looked up at Stripepelt, and he looked back at her with a deep spark of love in his eyes. "Today, you'll take your first steps into becoming a warrior, my kit."

She nodded with excitement. Stripepelt had just finished drying her up, and began to brush her fur back with his bristled tongue. The sun was mid-high in the sky, so Lightningkit knew that it was time sooner or later. From the camp entrance, a hunting patrol had just

returned, with wet silvery fish in their jaws. Stormpaw and Splashfish also arrived, both of their fur soaked deeply that they looked almost twice as small. The cats of RiverClan has thick fur coats, after all.

"I can't wait," whispered Lightningkit to Moonkit with excitement.

He nodded back to her, his whole body shaking with anticipation. Lightningkit felt more excitement than any of the others. *I won't be a runt anymore,* she thought, smiling to herself. *I'll be stronger than even Stripepelt when I'm through with training! He and my mother in StarClan will be so proud!*

"All cats old enough to swim, gather around to hear my words!" yowled Stonestar into the RiverClan clearing. Lightningkit's heart pounded faster as she thought, *It's time!* All three of the kits filed in the center of the clearing, gazing up at their leader who sat upon a branch of the dead willow in the center of the camp. Most of the warriors were already filed into the clearing, forming a circle around Lightningkit, Moonkit and Whitekit. Stormpaw, the only apprentice, was looking pleased. Perhaps he was thinking that he didn't have to do all the apprentice duties anymore now that they were soon going to join him. Splashfish took his seat right beside Stormpaw, and at the same moment, Stripepelt, Wingfeather and Blossomflight all gathered close to the dead willow that Stonestar sat upon.

The leader began to speak as the only RiverClan queen, Troutpool, padded into the clearing, taking a spot right beside her mate Waterleap.

"Today Whitekit, Moonkit and Lightningkit have become six moons old, and are old enough to become apprentices." Stonestar's words boomed all over the camp, and his voice was heard over the rushing river. "Whitekit, from this day forward, you will be known as Whitepaw. Shallowstream, you've always been a good warrior and received excellent training from none other than me. You will mentor Whitepaw."

"Whitepaw! Whitepaw!" the Clan chanted. Lightningkit felt that she was chanting the loudest.

Stonestar continued the ceremony. "Moonkit, from this day forward you will be known as Moonpaw. Your mentor will be Shellclaw. I hope that he will pass all that he knows to you."

"Moonpaw! Moonpaw!" the Clan chanted almost immediately. Both Whitepaw and Lightningkit joined in. "Moonpaw!"

Stonestar waited for the chanting to die down before continuing. "And finally," rasped the leader, still speaking loud, "Lightningkit. From this day forward, you will be known as Lightningpaw. Your mentor will be Stripepelt."

A murmur rippled through the crowd, and Lightningpaw stared up at Stonestar with her eyes wide. Her *father* was going to mentor her? Isn't that not allowed? She was hoping for a warrior of the Clan, and a good one at that. The cat she least expected to receive as a mentor was her own father. No cat chanted, and Splashfish spoke up, speaking the thoughts of all his Clanmates.

"Kin can't mentor kin!" yowled the warrior. "It's against the warrior code!"

Stripepelt's gaze landed on Splashfish. "There is no law that kin can't mentor kin," protested the deputy, his eyes hard. "It's *unusual*, but there's no rule against it and you can't say otherwise."

"But---" another warrior, Coldfur, was about to back Splashfish up, but Stonestar already cut off the two warriors.

"Thank you for bringing that matter up, Splashfish. But Stripepelt is right---we discussed the matter thoroughly before I appointed Lightningpaw her mentor."

Lightningpaw stared at Stripepelt. "You mean you *asked* to mentor me?"

Stripepelt dipped his head. "There's no better warrior to train you." His blue eyes turned warm, and Lightningpaw didn't know what to feel. She was nervous that no cat chanted her new name.

Suddenly, Moonpaw's voice rose over the commotion. "Lightningpaw! Lightningpaw!" yowled the newly-appointed

apprentice. Whitepaw and Stripepelt joined in right after, along with Wingfeather and Stormpaw. A heartbeat later, the uneasy Clan joined in, chanting Lightningpaw's name just as they did for Moonpaw and Whitepaw. A wave of relief washed over her.

She pressed herself to Moonpaw. "Thanks," she whispered to him, giving his ear a lick of gratitude.

Moonpaw purred. "What are friends for?" he asked, after finishing his chanting.

* * *

Lightningpaw was bounding over to the river, following her father and mentor, Stripepelt. She so badly wanted to ask why Stripepelt had requested to train her himself, but she knew that she had to push that matter away; Stripepelt was not one to be questioned. *Besides,* she thought, *it's great being mentored by the Clan deputy . . . right?* Her eyes flashed with doubt. They continued their way to the Lake Shore, where Whitepaw and Moonpaw were also headed.

"What's with the long face?" whispered Moonpaw. "You look confused."

"D-do I?" Lightningpaw stammered. "No, it's nothing. I mean I'm fine." She shook her head.

Whitepaw padded right by Lightningpaw's other side. "Why wouldn't she be? She gets the deputy as a mentor---even though he's her father," said the white she-cat. Was that bitterness in her tone? Lightningpaw convinced herself that she was just imagining it, but she couldn't help but hear the sharpness of her voice.

She looked at her paws. "It's not my fault that Stripepelt wanted to mentor me," she mumbled.

Whitepaw just sighed, and padded on ahead to her own mentor, Shallowstream. The silver she-cat greeted Whitepaw warmly, and Whitepaw responded back, excited.

"I'd love to talk," Moonpaw meowed, "But we've got a training session now. Do you mind talking later?"

She shrugged. "Sure."

Moonpaw nodded and ran ahead to his own mentor, Shellclaw. Stripepelt looked back, his blue eyes meeting Lightningpaw's own eyes. The white-furred deputy was pleased, his head held high with delight and his tail flicking with satisfaction. Lightningpaw raised her own head, trying to share his enthusiasm. *I get to spend a lot of time with the cat that's most important to me,* she thought. *There's nothing to be worried about. I should just embrace it, right?*

Stripepelt reached her, and rested his tail onto her spine. "Come on, Lightningpaw. The Lake Shore is just ahead. That's where we usually train apprentices, because there's a shallow end so the inexperienced won't drown."

"That's good to know," Lightningpaw said, looking on ahead. The sun was still mid-high, beating down it's hot rays onto the warriors and apprentices. Moonpaw and Whitepaw were taking the lead, walking over to their destination with excitement. Shellclaw and Shallowstream who were talking together followed behind them closely. Lightningpaw and Stripepelt both waked side-by-side, father and daughter, bringing up the rear. Deep down, excitement was rippling through her whole body.

This is her first time out of camp. Everything was amazing, going from the plants and trees she saw to the new scents she could taste. It was amazing! Her worries about her father being her mentor dropped as they got further and further away from the camp. Lightningpaw was paying close attention to her surroundings; clumps of herbs that she didn't know the name of and a lot of cobwebs as well were hidden among the lush trees and bushes. She could taste the scent of a squirrel, although she didn't fancy them much, scuffling around in the roots of a tree.

She looked up to Stripepelt, and tilted her head. "Can I go catch it?" she asked, motioning to the squirrel. It was not yet aware of the patrol of cats.

"No," Stripepelt meowed. "We're not here to hunt, we're just going to learn how to swim."

Shellclaw turned to them, straining his neck to look back. "Besides, we don't care much for squirrels! Let those tree-born ThunderClan cats have them. Fish is the best prey around---you all know it."

"That's right!" put in Whitepaw enthusiastically. "I'd kill for a trout right now."

"Later," Shallowstream said. "You three can't hunt, let alone swim yet. But by the end of the day, you'll all be swimming like guppies."

Lightningpaw thought of the tiny little fish in the water. She often saw them darting mindlessly all around the place as if they were trying to escape something. They were fast; she'd sure love to swim like them! She also remembered how they tasted---barely satisfying her belly. They were too small to have a proper meal on.

"Look, Lightningpaw," Moonpaw gasped, running up to her side. "Don't you see it? There's the Lake Shore!"

Lightningpaw looked up, and her eyes widened. "Wow," she whispered. "It's *huge*! And it all belongs to RiverClan?" The whole lake was so big that it stretched as far as the moon or so it seemed, reaching all four corners of the territories.

Shellclaw gave a small *mrrow* of laughter. "Of course it doesn't belong to RiverClan. It's too big for that," said the black warrior. "But we do use as much of it, but we try not to stray too far."

"We prefer hunting in the rivers by our territory, though," added Stripepelt. "It's much more easier because the water is clearer."

Lightningpaw listened to the sounds around her. The stream that they were walking by was growing louder, and up ahead, she could make out the large body of water, connecting to a small lake. "Wow," she whispered. "I don't understand how the rest of the Clans can't stand water. It's amazing!"

"It is," Moonpaw murmured with awe, also looking at the same direction.

"ThunderClan's territory---the only Clan who doesn't share our borders---is straight up ahead from our viewpoint," said

Shallowstream. "Do you see the oak trees in the distance? They're on the exact opposite side of the lake."

"I see," meowed Whitepaw, Lightningpaw and Moonpaw in unision. Whitepaw gave Lightningpaw an uneasy look.

"ShadowClan borders us from over there," the she-cat continued, pointing her nose into a different direction. "And WindClan is over there. The giant mounds you see are the hills on the moor."

"It's all so huge!" Lightningpaw said, her eyes wide. *And just imagine what's beyond the territory borders! The Lake Territories must be nothing compared to the rest of the world.*

"Well, come on," called Moonpaw, racing ahead. "What are we waiting for? Let's swim!"

Eagerly, Lightningpaw raced after him. She was excited. All of her thoughts and doubts have vanished completely. She was an apprentice, at long last!

Chapter Three

Still Lightning writing !

_____

A molted brown she-cat padded silently through the undergrowth. Her fur rippled brilliantly against her toned muscles under her thin pelt. The mouse she was after was still not aware of the predator that was stalking it. She waited for the right moment, staring at the plump mouse. She would leap at it at the perfect moment!

Suddenly, her hunt was ruined. "Blazepaw!" yowled her Clanmate, interrupting her chance. The mouse instantly scuffled into the undergrowth with a squeal. Annoyed, Blazepaw turned, and shot at a look at the cat who called her. It was Shadepaw, her best friend.

"You scared it off!" Blazepaw groaned. "I was just about to catch that mouse . . ."

"You would of caught it if you didn't over-analyze the situation," said Shadepaw. "All you've got to do is leap and kill."

Blazepaw shook her head. "It's not as easy as that. I was *so* close," she added, trying her best to make her friend feel guilty.

Shadepaw didn't even look taken back. The black she-cat's unusual orange eyes met Blazepaw's own eyes. "We've found two WindClan apprentices in the stream. Your mentor was calling; he thought it might be urgent."

Blazepaw growled. "Filthy WindClan cats, thinking they can trespass into our territory whenever they want!" she said with annoyance. Blazepaw had never had a battle in her life; times were peaceful between the Clans. However, she *had* been in a border skirmish with WindClan before a moon ago. She had a feeling that they would trespass again, considering the fact that they enjoy stealing prey.

She abandoned her spot and found the patrol which consisted of her mentor Mouse-ear, Oakfoot, Hawkfire---a young tom who had been made into a warrior three dawns ago---and last, Shadepaw's mentor, Sootheart. The two WindClan apprentices looked helpless and uncomfortable as they nervously watched the ThunderClan patrol scoop them up out of the water.

"Why have you two crossed our borders?" growled Mouse-ear, the patrol leader.

Blazepaw took her place beside him, and gave a look of challenge to the two brown tabby toms. They looked so young and small---or perhaps that was how all WindClan cats looked like. They were thin cats, after all.

"We didn't cross your territory," growled one of them. His fur was lighter than the other apprentice's, and his eyes were more hostile. "We just fell into the stream."

"That counts as crossing into our territory," growled Shadepaw. "Two scrawny things like you should watch where you're going."

"And you should watch what you're saying!" the WindClan apprentice retorted.

Sootheart stood taller. "Shadepaw, watch your mouth. Let Mouse-ear handle this with no interruptions." The ginger she-cat kept her gaze on Shadepaw, giving her apprentice a warning glance. Shapepaw just shut her mouth, but her eyes were locked onto the rude apprentice.

"What are you two doing so far from your camp?" Mouse-ear asked, looking between both of them. "You don't look like you've been training for over a moon!"

"Stop judging us!" snapped the apprentice.

The second WindClan apprentice who had been quiet up to this point put his tail at his friend's mouth. "Let me handle this, Hawkpaw," the tom meowed. Blazepaw felt slightly amused. *Hawkfire and Hawkpaw both share a name.* She looked between them

both, but they obviously didn't seem to care.

Hawkpaw was staring at his friend with disbelief. "ThunderClan is nothing but rude, Tigerpaw---"

"We didn't mean falling into the stream," said Tigerpaw, dipping his head apologetically. "But I don't think that we should be treated like we trespassed on your territory on purpose. The stream belongs to both WindClan and ThunderClan. Not just ThunderClan."

"Big words for a small apprentice," said Oakfoot with interest. As soon as Oakfoot said 'small,' Tigerpaw shot a look of defiance at the ThunderClan tom.

Hawkfire eyed the apprentices. "Shall we escort those two back to our camp?"

"Why?" Blazepaw asked. "They did nothing wrong. You heard Tigerpaw---the stream belongs to both Clans."

Hawkfire snorted. "I bet if we weren't here, they would have gone into our territory anyways."

"That's not true!" growled Hawkpaw. "Who do you think we are?"

"Two trouble-makers, that's what you two are," Shadepaw hissed, her fur fluffing up by her rear.

Mouse-ear gave Shadepaw a look. "I think you ought to calm down, Shadepaw," said the warrior. "Maybe I should just escort them back to their camp and not bring it up to Treestar?"

Blazepaw looked up at her mentor. Treestar was ThunderClan's leader, and was the brother of Mouse-ear. The day Mouseear became her mentor, she was excited because the tom was respected amongst his Clanmates and was an excellent hunter and fighter. "I think that's best," Blazepaw said.

Hawkpaw leaned closer to Tigerpaw, and whispered in his ear. Luckily, Blazepaw was close enough to hear it. "We don't have to stay---we can easily outrun these tree-hoggers. We don't want them trekking through our territory, anyways!"

Tigerpaw's eyes widened, but something about that idea lit a fire in his fierce amber gaze. Blazepaw stepped up and quickly moved behind them, blocking their exit. "You two are not going to outrun anyone," growled the ThunderClan apprentice. She felt triumphant and proud of herself; she certainly would never be able to outrun them but she could always outsmart them. The fire in Tigerpaw's eye quickly went away, and he narrowed them at Blazepaw.

Mouseear looked up at them. "I've made a decision and I will hold it," said her mentor. "Blazepaw and I will escort them back to their leader, and the rest of you will continue to patrol the border. Understood?"

Hawkfire shrugged. "Alright. I'll continue to lead the patrol, if that's good with you," meowed the young warrior. Blazepaw looked up at him, admiration gleaming in her eyes. Something about him always made her paws tingle. She meowed a quick good-bye to him before he went on with the border patrol. Oakfoot and Sootheart followed Hawkfire, and Shadepaw padded after them, shooting a glance of envy at Blazepaw.

Blazepaw indeed felt fortunate to be going into enemy territory. The idea made her excited that she will know possible future battle terrain.

Tigerpaw, on the other paw, looked a little annoyed and mumbled, "Why should they be going into our territory? We didn't even trespass into their's . . ." No cat but Blazepaw had heard him.

Hawkpaw glared at the ThunderClan cats. "You best not try hunting here," growled the tabby, "Or bad things are bound to happen."

"It's not like we need your prey anyways," retorted Blazepaw, standing taller.

Hawkpaw growled. "Who are you to say that?"

"I say what I want." Blazepaw gave the WindClan apprentice a hard stare.

Tigerpaw rolled his eyes. "Hawkpaw, cut that out. We best get

moving so we don't have to hang around ThunderClan anymore." The tabby tom padded back into WindClan territory, his chin held high. Hawkpaw grumbled something under his breath before walking besides him. Blazepaw could obviously tell that they weren't brothers; they seemed like they often fought, but they also seemed really close. She wondered if they really were littermates or not, but she didn't ask, feeling too awkward to start conversation.

She followed her mentor Mouse-ear, bringing up the rear of the group. Hawkpaw sighed and whispered something to Tigerpaw, but Blazepaw couldn't hear what it was.

Tigerpaw gave Hawkpaw a friendly nudge. "Don't be so bummed out, you shrub."

Hawkpaw narrowed his eyes. "Who are you calling a shrub, *shrub*?"

Mouseear's ears pricked with interest, and Blazepaw only seemed to get a little aggravated at the two toms. *Well, as long as they don't continue that, everything should be---*

"I'm not the shrub here," Tigerpaw said taking a step away from Hawkpaw, ruining Blazepaw's thoughts. "You're the one who's acting all gloomy."

"I'm not a shrub!" Hawkpaw growled.

Mischief glinted in Tigerpaw's eyes. "Hawkpaw is a shrub! Hawkpaw is a shrub!" teased the WindClan apprentice.

Blazepaw's claws dug into the earth. "Will you two cut it out? You're not kits!" she snapped.

Hawkpaw glared at her. "Look who's a shrub now, Tigerpaw. The ThunderClan apprentice who thinks she can tell *me* what to do!"

Mouse-ear's tail raised in the air, a sign that he wanted to silence them. "You three had better cut that out now, or else I'll make sure your leader gets you in to serious trouble, Hawkpaw and Tigerpaw." Then, he turned to Blazepaw. "And wait till' I tell Treestar to put you on boring apprentice duties for a quarter-moon!"

Blazepaw wanted to protest that she wasn't trying to tell them what to do, that she only wanted some peace. But she knew that it was best just to keep her mouth shut. Hawkpaw seemed to realize that too, and kept to himself, looking grumpily down to his paws. Tigerpaw, having a laid-back personality, didn't seem to really want to say anything himself.

Blazepaw kept on walking through the moor, uncomfortably raising her paws over the grass as if she were prancing like a deer. Tigerpaw and Hawkpaw seemed to smoothly be able to cross it with no trouble, and it made her wonder how they can stand such openness. She looked over to Mouseear, who looked just as uncomfortable as her.

After a little bit of time, Blazepaw was surprised that they hadn't run into a patrol. She could see up ahead in the distance a tall rock surrounded by clumps of heather. The camp didn't seem well-guarded, but as she approached, she could see how WindClan cats easily had the advantage in living in such an open space. Cats could have their eyes and ears everywhere without having to worry if there's something lurking in trees or the undergrowth. Their camp was very easy to defend.

Upon getting there, the camp entrance guard, who was a white tom with long legs, snarled. "Hawkpaw, Tigerpaw, what is the meaning of this?" demanded the white tom.

"We caught them in the stream, Swiftleaf," Mouse-ear informed. His tone of voice was not as hostile, but it was still defiant. "I just decided to escort these two trouble-makers home."

Hawkpaw snorted. "Not like we needed to be escorted, anyways!"

"And we weren't planning on crossing into their territory," Tigerpaw added. "We fell in after a race."

A heartbeat later, a pretty golden she-cat emerged from the camp entrance, easily shouldering her way through Swiftleaf with her slender shoulders. "Tigerpaw, where have you been?" demanded the she-cat warrior. "I was going to take you on a second hunting patrol but you were gone by the time I went to find you!"

Blazepaw found herself speak up, wanting to be a part of the conversation."We found him on ThunderClan territory."

"For the last time, we weren't on ThunderClan territory!" Hawkpaw snapped. "Ivystorm told Tigerpaw and I to take our games outside the camp, and we did. We just ended up falling into the stream."

"And it wasn't our fault," Tigerpaw put in. "I'm sorry, Sunheart."

Sunheart nodded to Tigerpaw, and turned her amber eyes onto Mouseear. "Thank you for escorting these two home---though I wouldn't have deemed it necessary."

Mouseear gave a curt nod but was the depths of his eyes were flashing with irritation. "I didn't want them getting away with anything so I decided to take them here on my own." He turned to Blazepaw, acknowledging her as well. "My own apprentice accompanied me."

"Well, threat or no threat, we don't welcome you here," said Swiftleaf with hostility in his tone. "I reckon it's best if you two leave at once. I'll have three warriors escort you."

Mouseear looked as if he wanted to protest, but didn't. After all, this wasn't ThunderClan territory---it belonged to WindClan. Blazepaw didn't think that she could ever get accustomed to the open moors anyways. Sleeping under the cover of the trees and sheltering from the ferocious winds was where she was most comfortable. She liked hunting in the undergrowth and smelling the forest sent. Living away from ThunderClan was something terrible to think about. No other Clan was better suited for her, anyways.

"Sunheart, do you mind choosing two other cats and taking these two back home?" Swiftleaf asked the pretty she-cat.

Sunheart nodded. "I can," she meowed. She dashed into camp for a few heartbeats, leaving the five other cats in awkward silence. Finally, Sunheart returned once more with a creamy black tom and a slender black she-cat by her side. "Cloudpatch and Rabbitleaf agreed to escort these two cats back to their own border."

Cloudpatch nodded, and shot a hostile glance at Blazepaw. "We'll make sure they leave real soon," growled the cream-colored tom. Rabbitleaf nodded with agreement.

"Good riddance," Hawkpaw muttered under his breath, and Tigerpaw just watched without saying a word.

Before the group of cats left, Sunheart called to Tigerpaw, "I'll see what to do with you when I get back!" before trekking over the grassy moor to meet with Cloudpatch, Rabbitleaf, Blazepaw and Mouseear. The ThunderClan cats and the WindClan cats were keeping a good distance away from each other, although they seemed to be keeping a close eye on Mouseear and Blazepaw all throughout their trip back to the ThunderClan borders.

Blazepaw felt happy to be back home. She couldn't stand not another moment out in the open exposed territory. Rabbitleaf gave a last look to the ThunderClan cat. "We don't want to see you coming back!" called the black she-cat before running off to meet with her Clan mates, Sunheart and Cloudpatch.

Blazepaw turned to Mouseear. "I suppose we should be getting back to camp," she meowed.

"We will," Mouseear said. His mouth was open; he was tasting the air. "But first I say we must catch something. Treestar will wonder where we are. Our previous patrol most likely made it back to camp."

"Okay." Blazepaw obediently padded into the trees, opening her own jaws to taste in the air. "I'll meet you back here after I manage to catch something." She stalked into the undergrowth, and Mouseear went a separate direction, skillfully creeping through the trees.

Blazepaw made sure she stayed by the border close to the stream to watch the WindClan cats go. They were quite hostile, especially that feisty little apprentice known as Hawkpaw. Tigerpaw, though, seemed much more easy-going, and looked as if he were a fast runner but a bit of a clumsy one. The other warriors of WindClan were unwelcoming--their leader hadn't even come out to greet

them.

Well, Blazepaw thought, *I hope I don't have to go there again. I wouldn't want to get Hawkpaw in my fur again!*

* * *

Blazepaw eagerly padded back into the ThunderClan camp, her tail raised with pride as she carried a squirrel and a mouse. These were two good and plump catches. It was greenleaf, the season of warmth and prey and sunshine. It hadn't rained in almost a moon, though, but everything was always good during greenleaf.

Upon dropping the fresh-kill on the prey pile, Shadepaw instantly burst into the clearing from the apprentice den, her orange eyes eager. "So?" promoted the apprentice. "How did it go with WindClan?"

Blazepaw shrugged. "It felt quite open in the moors, but I guess things were how I expected them." She remembered the WindClan cats she encountered. "They're hostile, and Hawkpaw's talks a lot of mouse-dung."

Shadepaw chose a starling from the fresh-kill pile. "Hawkpaw's just talk, he's not all that," she said. "I've spoken with him tons of times at the Gatherings I've been to. He's not so pleasant."

"I've noticed," Blazepaw said, thinking about how many arguments and retorts he had made so far. There were so many that she didn't think she could keep count, but it did amuse her of how grumpy one can be. Blazepaw took her squirrel from the fresh-kill pile, and said, "I'm going to bring this to the elders. I'll talk to you later, Shadepaw."

"Alright, talk to you soon," she agreed, walking off with her starling.

Blazepaw padded to the elder's den, and poked her head inside. She could see Slipperyfeet grooming Lightfur, while Blackears dozed off in the back of the den. Quietly, the apprentice padded inside the den, and placed the fresh-kill on the ground.

Lightfur was the first to notice her. "Hi, Blazepaw," she said with a

purr. "Nice of you to stop by."

"I caught a squirrel today and thought that I should give it to the elders," Blazepaw offered, nosing her prey towards the three. "Would you like to take it?"

Blackears stood up, his tail flicking with delight. "Squirrel's my favorite," he meowed, and then added, "Thank you Blazepaw. It's a nice squirrel." The elder dipped his head down and took a bite out of it's warm flesh. Blazepaw's mouth watered but she did not bother to ask for a bite herself.

"Don't mind if I do," purred Lightfur, taking the next bite. She seemed to relish the taste of the prey.

Slipperyfeet, who hadn't moved, shuddered. "I don't understand how you all like that stuff. Squirrels are too hairy and scrawny-I much prefer things like voles and birds."

"I can get you one, if you'd like," Blazepaw offered.

"No." Slipperyfeet shook his head, still remaining in his nest. "I ate earlier, so I'm fine. But thanks anyways," he added, before curling up and covering his nose with his tail.

Blackear's whiskers twitched. "How can a cat live in a forest if he does not like it's squirrels?" asked the tom in a low voice humorously. She looked up to Blazepaw. "Thank you, young'n, but we're good from here on out. You may go if you'd like."

Blazepaw nodded and padded outside of the den, letting Lightfur and Blackead continue their jokes. She was headed for the fresh-kill pile, hungry after seeing those two elders eat the delicious-looking squirrel. She wish she could have had it for herself, but it was in the warrior code to make sure to feed the Clan before a warrior will take his own meal. Blazepaw's feelings about the warrior code were secure, and she never intended on breaking it no matter the cause.

She was about to choose a good looking sparrow from the pile, until she heard a cat call her name. She recognized him instantly-Hawkfire was sitting by the warriors den with a vole by his paws.

"Do you want to share with me, Blazepaw?" he asked.

Blazepaw's eyes lit up like a kit's and she eagerly nodded. "I'd love to!" she said. "I-I mean, it's better than wasting the prey on the fresh-kill pile . . ."

Hawkfire took a bite from the vole. "You're right, Blazepaw." A glint of something humorous sparked in Hawkfire's eyes, but Blazepaw pretended that she didn't see it so she wouldn't feel offended that he was secretly teasing her. He watched as she took a bite of the vole.

Blazepaw instantly purred. "It tastes great!"

"I caught it during the border patrol." Hawkfire bent down and took a bite himself.

"Good job," she said, her voice sounding of approval.

Hawkfire simply shrugged. "The poor thing ran straight across my paws; it wasn't all that." Blazepaw took another bite and so did Hawkfire.

The ThunderClan apprentice beamed. If only every day turned out to be like this!

Chapter Four

Still Lightning. Sorry we hadn't updated in a month, Lightning had writer's block~! How fun :)! *note the sarcasm*

Silentpaw, acting as stealthy as he could manage, crept past through the dark shade of the pine tree he was under. His dusky gray-brown coat blended in perfectly with the wood of the tree as he pressed close to it, his eyes scouting the area. His tail was slightly above-ground, his paws stepping lightly. His ears were pricked to the area around him. No movement at all sounded whatsoever, although he was expecting something else. Perhaps he was too well-hidden to be found?

But suddenly and unexpectedly, the branches overhead rustled, and Silentpaw looked up immediately to see a molted gray tom standing above him. "Pineleaf!" he gasped, as the warrior tom lunged from his position.

Pineleaf outstretched his paws, but Silentpaw burst from his spot, dodging the sudden attack from the older tom. "Well spotted," growled Pineleaf, "But you are too slow!" He raked his claws over Silentpaw's cheek, but the apprentice doubled back, dodging the next attack. Pineleaf didn't do any severe scratches on Silentpaw's face, but he could feel a slight sting.

He forced himself to ignore the tingling pain, and narrowed his eyes at Pineleaf. "Think before you speak," he hissed at the warrior before going from defense to offense. Silentpaw leaped gracefully into the air, and landed squarely on Pineleaf's shoulders, forcing the molted gray tom flat on the floor. Immediately, Pineleaf began to struggle, and managed to trip Silentpaw right off of him.

Satisfied, Pineleaf scrambled to his paws, shaking off the dirt on his fur. "You almost had me, Silentpaw," meowed Pineleaf, nodding of approval, "But your last move was reckless and you did not seem to think at all."

Silentpaw forced himself on his paws as he received both praises and criticism from his mentor. The apprentice was going to be a warrior in perhaps less than three moons, and he often had fought battles that were close to real to train him quicker than the other apprentices. He lifted his chin. "I will be over satisfactory in our next session."

"And that is what I expect from you as well," Pineleaf said, beginning to stalk ahead. "Go hunt something before returning to camp," he added. "Do not return without at least a piece of prey."

"Yes, Pineleaf." Silentpaw dipped his head to his mentor, and dashed into the marshy forest. Pineleaf had often treated him coldly like this, and Silentpaw himself had picked up a little on the tom's personality after long days of working with him. He wished at times that he could earn a new mentor that was kinder, and that his Clanmates were more appreciative of him, but he knew that it was impossible. Things were not really all that great for Silentpaw in ShadowClan.

He stalked through the dense cover of trees, taking in the scents of the marsh. He crept right through a clump of reeds, trying to make sure that they didn't rattle so he would not make sound. Underpaw, it was wet---he realized he was standing right over a small puddle.

Perfect, he thought. *There is bound to be a frog or two nearby*.

Silentpaw pressed closer to the reeds, and tried to see beyond. Then, he heard a croak. The fishy scent of the frog reached his nose, and his fur bristled with excitement. Pineleaf would definitely praise him if he caught it, because that will prove that Silentpaw didn't take too long in a hunt and that he had good senses.

Silentpaw noticed that the frog's back was turned to him. He crept a little closer, trying to avoid stepping in the puddle again so that he would not make any noise. When the moment came, he leaped, and the frog spun around. It must have heard the reeds rustle as he jumped. But the prey couldn't run away, because Silentpaw had already leaped onto it.

The frog's flat limbs flailed and it croaked with alarm, but the

ShadowClan apprentice already had his teeth into the prey's stout body. It's chest puffed in the weird way it does multiple times, as it croaked and squirmed in the apprentice's jaws. It was too late, though. Within moments, the slimy, cold creature was dead, hanging limp in his teeth. Feeling successful, Silentpaw slid out from the reeds and carried his prey proudly to the ShadowClan camp, his chin raised and his tail lashing with excitement, despite his usual calm and reserved attitude.

Before he reached the camp, however, he took a few drinks from the small pond that was located near the camp before crawling through the entrance. He immediately saw his mentor, Pineleaf, talking to ShadowClan's prettiest she-cat, Emberlight.

For a moment, Silentpaw thought that he shouldn't bother Pineleaf, but then he changed his mind. *I wanted to make my mentor proud, right?* he thought. *Well, here goes nothing.*

He padded up to the two warriors, and nudged Pineleaf's shoulder. "I've returned," said Silentpaw, holding up his piece of prey. "Look, I've caught a frog."

Emberlight sneered. "Can't you see we're talking?"

"Go away, Silentpaw," ordered Pineleaf.

Silentpaw stood there, offended for a few moments, before he sighed and nodded. "Alright, fine . . ." he mumbled.

"Good. Now leave us be," his mentor snapped.

Silentpaw turned away, and padded over to the fresh-kill-pile to drop off the frog he caught. Icekit was staring at the piece of prey with eyes that seemed bigger than her stomach, obviously hungry.

Trying to be nice, he said, "You can have it. Err, if you want it." He felt awkward talking to the kits, because he never got involved with them much only when he use to change their beddings when they couldn't keep themselves clean.

Embarrassed, Icekit dipped her head. "Really? Thank you! It looks juicy, right?"

Silentpaw shrugged, and began to walk away only until she stopped him with another question.

"Did you catch it?" she asked him, only getting more curious. Icepaw must really like frogs if she was this impressed.

Sighing, Silentpaw nodded, not wanting to make conversation. "It was not much a deal, just a small frog." He flicked his tail in dismissal. "Now, if you'll eat that, I'll go . . ."

"No, wait!" Icekit ran right in front of him before he made his way to the apprentice's den. "Teach me how to hunt, will you? It's only yet until I'm an apprentice, and I'd love a head-start! My mentor will be so proud . . ."

"But Icekit---" protested Silentpaw

"I won't take your time! Just teach me how to crouch and how to pounce, it's not too burdening. We can practice on your frog. Please!" Icekit's big eyes looked insisting.

Silentpaw sighed heavily. "All right, just lay off," he said, letting his shoulders slump. "Bring the frog here."

Without another word, she raced to the fresh-kill pile and snatched up Silentpaw's catch, bounding back eagerly with a triumphant look in her eyes. Icekit was the oldest kit in the nursery, since Fernkit and Darkkit were still so small. She lost both her parents in a battle long ago even though Silentpaw remembers, but Icekit grew up fine with the aid of the queens in the nursery and the cats of the Clan. Silentpaw tried to once convince himself that him and Icekit were the same, growing up with no parents or siblings . . . but he only realized that it wasn't true when he noticed how much his Clan, especially his denmates, billy him.

"Okay," he meowed once she laid the frog before his paws. "First you've gotta crouch like this." He bent down in the best crouch he could muster, hoping that she'd catch along quick so he can go to sleep in his den.

She copied him, but unfortunately for him, she was a terrible mess.

"Icekit, spread your paws apart! How are you going to leap with them clinging to each other?" he snapped.

She scuffled her forepaws apart and bent her back legs lower. "Sorry!"

"Now, flatten your ears and lower your tail. They'll stick out when you hide," he went on, inspecting her form. She did as told with ease, and when she looked fine enough, he nodded with approval. "Then you jump at your prey and catch it!" Silentpaw leaped from his spot, and snatched the frog between his jaws. "Like this!"

He set the frog down for her to try, and she leaped, but she narrowly missed. "Oh, mouse-dung!" she cursed. "I was so close."

"That was good enough. Maybe I should go now," he offered, hoping she'd let him.

But much to his bad luck, she shook her head. "Not until I catch that frog."

She crouched again, better than the last time, and wiggled her haunches before she gave another leap. This time, she landed squarely on top of the frog's body, and gave a triumphant yowl.

"Good job, Icekit," he praised.

Icekit's tail flicked happily. "I'm going to be the best hunter of ShadowClan! I'll always remain unseen."

"I'm sure you will." Silentpaw didn't want to make Icekit feel bad to tell her that the frog wasn't actually moving in the first place, so it was inevitable that she'd catch it---instead, he began to make his way to the apprentice den, but was stopped by one of his denmates, Frogpaw.

"Oh, teaching the little kits, huh Silentpaw?" taunted the white tabby. "You two motherless *outcasts* seem to make the perfect team."

"Lay off, Frogpaw," muttered Silentpaw. Over the moons he'd lived in ShadowClan, he learned that letting Frogpaw get to him would only cost him trouble. He just wanted to climb right into his comfy

nest, and have a nice long sleep away from those who hate him . . .

But Frogpaw didn't want to sympathize. "Hey, Icekit, you heard?" he called to her, who was practicing her pounces on her frog.

"No, what?" she called back.

"It doesn't matter!" Silentpaw cut off, not wanting her to feel bad. "Just keep practicing, you're doing great!" She brightened at his praise, and just when Frogpaw was about to open his big mouth again, the deputy, Echofoot, and the young warrior, Redrowan, cut in between them. Both apprentices dipped their heads to them, a sign of respect.

"Now, now," Echofoot meowed, "what are you two arguing over this time?"

"No argument, I'm just going to my nest," said Silentpaw, thanking StarClan above that they cut in. Him talking to Frogpaw often ended up in arguments, and every cat in ShadowClan knew this too well. It's not like Silentpaw wants to be bothered by him anyways, but it can't be helped because Frogpaw just loved picking fights and bullying him.

Redrowan purred. "Well, I recommend you *don't* go to your nest. Foxstar says he has an announcement later, and it's best you'd be awake for that."

"Yes, Redrowan," Silentpaw said.

"And was that you teaching young Icekit to hunt?" she asked.

"Yes, it was me," he responded truthfully.

"You'll make a good mentor one day, Silentpaw. But I recommend to not practice on dead prey. The warrior code says to respect and honor our food, not to play with it," Redrowan advised.

Frogpaw sniggered. "Shouldn't he get punished for breaking the code, then?"

"Oh, he did not break the code," Echofoot purred.

"I'm so sorry!" Icekit chirped up. "I talked him in to doing it; he never returns to camp without prey, so I thought that he must be a good hunter! I wanted a head start before my apprentice ceremony, so it's *my* fault."

"Oh, Icekit, it's nobody's fault! Just be ready for Foxstar's announcement later on," said Redrowan with an amused *mrrow* of laughter. "And Frogpaw, don't bother them anymore. Go talk to some cat else, okay?"

"No worries, I wasn't planning on wasting any more time on them," Frogpaw said simply, before walking off to Shiningpaw who was sitting by the center of the camp.

"How rude!" Icekit puffed, stomping a paw down.

Silentpaw quietly agreed with her as Redrowan and Echofoot made their ways back over to the leader's den. The moment they were gone, Icekit ran back to her frog to eat it up, and Silentpaw, left to do nothing, sighed and waited. He wondered in how long this ceremony will take place, because he really wanted to sleep before Pineleaf put him on some boring apprentice duty. His mentor often tried to get Silentpaw in messy situations.

He left his spot to sit in the shade, where Redrowan had retreated to. She must be done talking to Foxstar now, because she seemed to be all alone. Taking a spot just a couple tail-lengths away, he sighed with relief to be in a relaxing area.

Redrowan took a quick glance at him. "Hot, isn't it?" she asked.

Silentpaw nodded. "I guess so."

"What did you and Pineleaf do when you two were out alone?" she continued, obviously trying to form a conversation. Redrowan's eyes were hopeful for something to talk about, and Silentpaw only seemed to be, well . . . *silent.*

"We battle-trained, and then I hunted," he responded, flicking his tail to the frog that Icekit was devouring. Silentpaw lifted his gaze, and observed the camp peacefully to see that everything today was

well and quiet. Foxstar and Echofoot were speaking to each other inside of the leader's den, along with the senior warrior Nightpelt. He wondered what Foxstar was going to announce later on . . .

After a few more moments of quiet, Silentpaw finally spoke. "Thank you for driving Frogpaw away from me. He often bothers me and there's not much I can really do."

"No problem. I'm the one who raised you up, and who also raised Icekit," she said, her gaze warming. "When your mother died, no cat volunteered to look after you, so from that moment on I knew things would be hard for you."

"What about Icekit?" he asked.

"Well, I was the first to offer." Redrowan's face shone with glee. "Her parents death happened when she could barely open her eyes, and I had lost my own kits to that battle . . . so Icekit had really helped me."

"It's more like you helped each other," Silentpaw pointed out. "Look how happy she's become."

The warrior she-cat sighed. "I wish I could have made you happy."

"It's not like I am sad," Silentpaw pointed out, suddenly feeling bad. "I believe when I am a warrior, I'll get the respect I deserve from Pineleaf and the others."

"I'm sure you will, too," Redrowan purred. "Deep down, you're a wonderful young cat, Silentpaw."

Chapter Five

Lightning again :D I hope so many point of view's isn't confusing. This is the last one, I swear. Just remember: Tigerpaw, Lightningpaw, Blazepaw, Silentpaw and Icepaw. Those are our protagonists.

Blaze finished the rest of this chapter! It was started by Lightning though :)
~Blaze

Welp Blaze did the last part. Thank you so much ;_;
~~Lightning

(Shadow was going to write this chapter but didn't have time >.< curse school!)

After Icekit licked her lips from her tasty meal, she gave felt great from the cold frog in her belly. She got up to go tell Silentpaw that she'd finished his prey, but when she saw him talking to Redrowan, she decided not to, and instead walked around camp without much to do. As she padded along, she wondered what it was like to have a sibling to play with, until her mind floated from the thought as soon as she spotted a butterfly resting on the tip of Frozenfoot's tail.

Her own tail flicked with excitement. *I wonder if he even notices*, she thought. She stared at the bright-winged butterfly for several moments, before she wiggled her haunches and leaped right on to the tom's tail.

"I got it!" she yowled with excitement, feeling something under her paw.

Immediately, Frozenfoot burst up from his spot. "That's my tail you've got, Icekit!" he gasped. "What in StarClan's name are you doing?"

"Huh, where's the butterfly?" she wondered, looking around. She lifted her paw, revealing the warrior's white thin tail, and he angrily flicked it to his stomach as if to say not to bother him when he's resting.

"There is no butterfly," he scowled, laying back down. "Go play with someone else's tail, I've got sleep to catch up on."

"Sorry!" she apologized. "But I swear there was a butterfly." She waited for his response before noticing that he had already fallen back asleep. Shrugging, she looked around for her prey, wondering if it had flown off because she was just too slow to catch it. Then, she noticed it lazily flying above-head, too far for her to reach. Disappointed, she watched it, wondering if it was going to come down any time soon. When it hadn't, she scowled, and sat down by the edge of camp, nothing to do.

Icekit wished she had a sibling more than ever now. Her head pounded because she was bored, and the other two nursery kits were too young to even bother with. Secretly, she just wished she could travel outside camp and go on her own adventure, but she knew that it was against the warrior code. *Just* when *am I gonna become an apprentice?* she thought, mind drifting beyond ShadowClan. She thought of all the prey outside, and their rival Clans especially since she knew that she might have a battle one day. The thought made her excited. Maybe she should go and ask Foxstar right now?

"All cats old enough to catch their own prey, join around for a Clan meeting!" called the ShadowClan leader, as if on cue with Icekit's imagination.

Curious, she padded to the gathering of her Clan, although she technically was not old enough to catch prey. What announcement's going to happen? She looked at her Clanmates to see if they had any knowledge about this, but most of them seemed as confused as her.

Then, a sudden thrill of excitement rose up her spine. She was going to be an apprentice soon! Maybe it was already time for her ceremony!

All of the cats of ShadowClan gathered around the clearing, and from the corner of her eye, she saw Redrowan and Silentpaw take two places by each other near the back of the crowd. Redrowan gave a nod to Icekit, pride flickering in her eyes, while Silentpaw kept his dark eyes up at Foxstar.

When all cats have gathered around, Foxstar began to speak. "We're here today to announce a new-coming apprentice," he began. "Icekit, you have reached the age of six moons and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day forward, until you receive your warrior name, you shall be Icepaw."

"Icepaw! Icepaw!" ShadowClan cheered, as she made her way to the center of the crowd. Her tail flicked pleasantly, and all her previous excitement bubbled up into her chest. *Who will be my mentor?* she wondered hopefully.

"Nightleap!" Foxstar called, pointing his tail to a black tom. "You will be Icepaw's new mentor. I expect you to pass down all you know to this young apprentice."

Nightleap shouldered his way through the crowd and landed his ice blue eyes on Icepaw. As if inspecting her, he eyed her for a moment before touching his nose to her's. Icepaw trembled with excitement. Nightleap was one of ShadowClan's best warriors, and one of their best hunters. She couldn't wait to begin training with him!

"I'll be your best apprentice yet!" she declared to him.

"We'll see about that," Nightleap said cooly. He took his nose away from her's and looked around, seeming proud for having a new apprentice despite his calm demeanor.

The cheering hasn't died down yet, and Icepaw waited, fidgeting with excitement as she listened to her name course around the camp. When it had ended, Foxstar said, "That will be all! We welcome you, Icepaw, as an apprentice of ShadowClan. I hope you train well, and this meeting is dismissed!"

Foxstar leaped off his den and padded over to Icepaw, giving her a word of congratulations, before walking off with the deputy.

Finally, the chanting had stopped, and cats were coming all around her to wish her the best for her time. When the group dismissed, she caught Silentpaw's eye for a moment, and he gave her a nod before walking to the apprentice den.

"I think he's telling me to follow him!" Icepaw said, turning to Nightleap. "Can I go see?"

"Well of course. You'll be moving into the apprentice's den now, and you'll need a nest to sleep in," Nightleap responded. "When you're done over there, meet me by the camp entrance. I'm going to show you all around the territory."

Icepaw gasped. "Wow! I can't wait! And not only that, I'll be sleeping in the apprentice's den!" She got up and raced after Silentpaw, her tail flicking with excitement.

When she had reached by his side, his tail flicked down on an old nest in the front of the den. "This was the old apprentice's nest. Nobody bothered to rid of it because we all figured you'd be an apprentice soon enough," Silentpaw explained. "All that needs to be changed is the moss, and removed of any thorns it might of caught."

"It's perfect," said Icepaw. "Who's going to clean it out?"

"I'll do as much as I can if you'd like," Silentpaw offered, "But when you're back from the territory, it's your responsibility." He flicked his ears to Nightleap, who seemed to be getting impatient as he waited by the camp entrance. "I think your mentor is waiting for you."

Icepaw nodded. "Thanks, bye Silentpaw!"

She raced away from the apprentice's den, feeling pleased at her new sleeping arrangements. Once she caught up with her mentor, the two of them left the camp, her trembling with excitement.

They were about a tree-length away from the camp when Icepaw shouted, "The territory is bigger than I thought!"

"Shh! If you're so loud, you'll scare away all the prey," scolded Nightleap, shaking his head disapprovingly.

She bent her head with embarrassment. "Sorry!"

"Again, lower your voice, Icepaw," he said with a sigh. "We might hunt today, but we won't be able to catch anything if there *isn't* anything to catch."

Icepaw nodded and said in a lower tone, "Sorry. And wow, we're going to hunt? I can't wait!" Her voice was a bit above a whisper, because she was afraid to be scolded again.

As they continued through the territory, Icepaw was amazed by the tall pine trees of her Clan. The marshy ground and the misty air felt relaxing and good, her mind felt calm. The shade and darkness of the leaves from up above made her feel cool. There was *nothing* better than the ShadowClan forest. She wondered how WindClan could survive the hot sun on green-leaf days.

She was about to mention something about the other Clans to her mentor, but he stopped walking and stopped her as well with a flick of his tail. "What's wrong?" she whispered, tilting her head.

"Look, there's a vole," he replied, pointing his nose to an animal slightly larger than a mouse. "Watch me catch it, and then I'll teach you a hunting position."

She nodded eagerly, excited to be learning how to hunt so soon. Her eyes watched Nightleap carefully as he bent down into a crouch, his tail slightly above the ground, his fur blending in with the darkness around him. He stalked the creature, circling around where the vole could not see him. Then, with experienced skill, he silently pushed off the ground and landed on the vole, stomping down on it's tail before it ran away. Then, he bit into it's neck, giving it a killing bite.

Nightleap padded up to her with the prey in his mouth. "And that is how you hunt."

"That was amazing!" exclaimed Icepaw. "Will I be able to do that as silently as you?"

"None of my apprentices were able to do it on their first try, but all

of them were able to catch a piece of prey the day they were apprenticed," he explained. "*Everyone* I train becomes a good hunter."

Icepaw stared up at him with admiration, her eyes becoming brilliantly bright. "I want to do that too!" The vole he had caught was plump, and would definitely feed some cat in the Clan. Icepaw would feel great if she could contribute to the Clan's survival---especially by hunting.

"Okay, you crouch like this," Nightleap explained after he finished burying the vole to the side. They would get that later. He was positioned just like before, with his legs slouched down and his forepaws shoulder-width apart. One back leg was slightly further than the other, which probably allowed him to stalk.

Icepaw tried to copy him, and she bent down. Her muscles trembled at the weight of her body, and before she knew it, she tumbled forward, falling right on to her face. "Argh!" she shouted.

"Don't worry, Icepaw, you'll get the hang of it," encouraged her mentor. "You just have to be patient."

"But it looked so easy!" she said as she got up from the ground. "The way you did it showed no struggle at all, whatsoever, and my legs hurt the moment *I* tried it!"

Nightleap sighed. "I thought I told you no one gets it on their first try. And it's not that easy, I'll tell you this."

Icepaw let out an exasperated sigh. "Fine, I'll try it again . . ." she mumbled as she got in to position again. When she tried to bend down again, her muscles still shook and her forelegs ached. She held on for as long as she could before she pushed off from her back paws and leaped into the air, clumsily landing on top of a leaf. No doubt about it, she became excited the moment she tumbled on the ground, even though she was very noisy.

Nightleap nodded. "That skill was poor, but you were able to get down the basics. Good enough for a new apprentice, Icepaw."

At least I was able to do it! she thought, shaking the dust and dirt from her pelt. "Can I try it on real prey now?" she begged.

"Sure, let's just go near ThunderClan borders. There's normally good squirrels and mice to catch near their territory." He began to lead her away. "Besides, you haven't seen much of the territory yet."

"Oh, you're right!" realized Icepaw. She hadn't noticed how caught up she had been with her trying to get the hunting style done. But now that she knew she was able to make the leap, she felt ready to go on and catch real prey.

The dark leaves of the pine trees were getting lighter and thinner as they made their way towards the ThunderClan border. The smell of the forest, to Icepaw, became more sweet than the fresh ShadowClan air she was used to. Despite that, she liked the scents of the forests even though she preferred pine over oak any day.

Icepaw looked around the quiet scenery, trying to listen to her surroundings better. She heard the singing of the birds up in the trees, and she spotted them flying over from branch to branch, probably trying to get to their nests. She recalled that there were barely any birds in the fresh-kill pile, so they must be hard to catch. She also noticed a quick squirrel dash up to a tree, and she concluded that those might be hard to catch as well. They were fast, after all, and they climbed as good as the cats of ThunderClan.

I should be able to at least catch a mouse, she thought. *They're easier than voles, so it's a good thing to start with*.

"We are almost there," called Nightleap over his shoulder. "Just a few more fox-lengths and we will be by ThunderClan borders."

"Okay," she said.

Icepaw noted her surroundings, wanting to make sure she remembered her way around in case she were to ever get lost in ShadowClan. It was easy to remember, because the pine trees were very spaced out, and the landmarks all around her were memorable. This was nothing like she had ever seen before. Being confined in camp for six long moons was boring compared to this day alone!

She always knew that there was an adventure waiting outside the camp entrance . . .

Nightleap stopped walking, and so did she. "We are finally here," he called over his shoulder. She scrunched up her nose the moment she scented something she never picked up before. "That stench you smell is the ThunderClan border markers; remember it well, because if you cross those borders, there will be trouble."

Icepaw nodded quickly. "I wouldn't want that. I'll remember . . ."

"Good," meowed Nightleap approvingly. "Okay, now scent around, but be sure that you don't cross the borders if your prey runs over. That happened countless times before and it is never fun to get into quarrels."

She took that in mind as she began to scent around for some prey to catch. After a few moments of no success, she finally could pick up a fresh smell of a squirrel. *I did decide I'd try to catch something easy*, she thought, *but I'd make Nightleap so proud if I caught that squirrel . . .*

She could scent the squirrel father down the border, and she followed the scent quietly. Finally, she came upon a small mound, and she crouched down so she would be ready to pounce on her prey. The squirrel was nibbling on nut after nut, enjoying it's tasty meal.

I'm sorry! she thought apologetically. She never actually considered the fact that catching prey means killing it as well, but this was the only way to eat. She didn't waste any time; in a moment, she leaped from her place, paws outstretched. She felt her mentor's eyes burning on her back as they observed her every move.

For a moment, Icepaw felt that she would actually catch her first prey . . . but just before she was able to grab it, it dashed from it's spot before she could even land. Icepaw clumsily tumbled to the ground.

"Mouse-dung!" she cursed, frustrated.

Nightleap emerged from behind cover. "Don't worry, Icepaw, it was only your first try."

She nodded. "I'm not worrying, and I know . . ." she mumbled. "I was hoping I'd get beginner's luck."

"Your tactic was good though," said Nightleap approvingly. "You were smart to duck down on that hill. It gave you cover from the squirrel so it couldn't scent you."

"But it still got away!" she pointed out.

"That doesn't matter. You'll catch one at some point," he encouraged. "Try again. I smell mouse somewhere around. I expect you to find it and catch it on your own. If you catch it, we'll tour the whole territory tomorrow. If you don't catch it, you'll be put on apprentice duties."

"Alright," Icepaw agreed. *I have to get that mouse*! she thought, still feeling bad about loosing the squirrel.

She crept forward, ears pricked and eyes scanning the ground in hopes of finding the elusive mouse. She inhaled silently, following the scent under a tree root, where a little mouse sat nibbling on a small seed.

Now is my chance! Sinking low, Icepaw tried desperately to balance her weight on her paws as her mentor had just told her. With no hesitation she leaped, pushing hard with her hind legs. Too hard! She crashed into the root above the mouse, stubbing her paw as she went. Icepaw was barely able to catch herself an instant before her face slammed into the root in front of her.

She recoiled with a yowl, rubbing her nose and wincing at the sting.

"I thought I had it that time!" She snarled, digging her paws into the dirt. Nightleap placed his tail gently on her back, but she shrugged it off.

"You are tired. It's your first day out. You have time. Come back to camp and rest. Tomorrow we can try again." Nightleap reassured, but to no avail.

Icepaw spent the rest of their trek home silent. She listened to Nightleap describe the territory and random things with half an ear. The rest of her body remained coiled with tension and rage at herself and her incapability.

When they finally reached the camp she broke away from the group and settled with a sigh in her nest, instantly falling asleep.